



**INTERNATIONAL SYMPOSIUM**  
**“Open Pages in South Asian Studies - 2”**  
**22 – 23 January, 2019**  
**Gauhati University**

The **Department of Foreign Languages, GAUHATI UNIVERSITY, INDIA** and **International Centre for South Asian Studies, the Faculty of International Relations and Area Studies of the Russian State University for the Humanities, Moscow, Russia** invite you to participate in the Symposium cum Workshop **“Open Pages in South Asian Studies - 2”** on 22-23 January, 2019 organised in collaboration with the **Centre for South-East Asian Studies (CSEAS) and OKD Institute of Social Change and Development, Guwahati.**

**The Event**

Though contemporary South Asia comprises of eight countries namely Afghanistan, Bangladesh, Bhutan, India, Maldives, Nepal, Pakistan and Sri Lanka, they share a common origin and history as part of the Indus Valley Civilisation. In terms of geographical location, South Asia extends south from the main part of the continent to the Indian Ocean. The principal boundaries of South Asia are the Indian Ocean, the Himalayas, and Afghanistan. The Arabian Sea borders Pakistan and India to the west, and the Bay of Bengal borders India and Bangladesh to the east. The western boundary is the desert region where Pakistan shares a border with Iran. This common geographical location unites these countries politically as a sub-region of Asia.

Within this region, two of the world’s great religions namely Hinduism and Buddhism originated, but there are also immense Muslim populations and large groups of followers of various other religions as well. Hinduism, Islam, and Buddhism are the three major religions of South Asia. In addition, Sikhism is a major religion in the Punjab region, which is located on India’s northern border with Pakistan.

The nature of the political systems in the South Asian countries makes this region even more politically and geo-strategically unique. It has a long history of democratic transition and consolidation along with periodic authoritarian and military rule in the countries like Bangladesh, Pakistan and Maldives. Though Bhutan is a small country in terms of its territorial size, the innovation of Gross National Happiness (GNH) has drawn considerable global attention towards this region in ensuring and promoting a culture of sustainable development and peace.

Ethno-linguistic pluralism is a hallmark of the South Asian countries whereas it is also a prime factor of contentious relations among the member countries and intra-country

conflicts in the form sub-nationalist and secessionist movements. The region is also home to the problem of terrorism that has paralysed not only the human and national development, but also has derailed the mutual understanding and harmonious relations of the countries in the region. Besides these, the border conflicts among the South Asian countries make this region more volatile and strategically significant in the contemporary global order. The South Asian Association for Regional Cooperation (SAARC), mandated to integrate the countries of South Asia politically and economically, has merely failed to bring in the desired results of integration and cooperation due to these contentious relations.

Migration across borders has been an issue of contention in the region. Consolidation of the neo-liberal economic policies across the countries in the region has brought both opportunities and challenges. In terms of Gross Domestic Product (GDP), many countries in the region witnessed marked progress. But, this has been accompanied by inequality both in income and in other social security domains. Growth with inequality has brought in popular outrage in the region. Informalization of labour, and growing privatization of essential services added new forms of inequality and insecurity, apart from raising concerns over ecology and common resources.

The proposed symposium cum workshop, which will be interdisciplinary in nature, will endeavour to address these critical issues both from the perspective of the respective countries as well as from the perspective of South Asia as a transnational regional entity.

**The symposium will also focus on South-East Asia, SCO and BIMSTEC with special focus on Russia's role in the South-East Asia.**

**The issues and areas, the Symposium endeavours to deliberate are the following:**

1. Understanding South Asia as a region
2. Cultural realm of South Asia – Various aspects of Cultural landscapes including religious diversities, linguistic and sociological mosaic.
3. Common Historical Connections- Ancient, Colonial and Post-Colonial Linkages of the South Asian region
4. State processes and development experiences in South Asia
5. South Asian Regionalism and Integration: Trends, Problems and prospects
6. Engaging Russia in South East Asia

**7. Regional Blocks in South-East Asia and SCO, BIMSTEC etc**

#### **General Instructions**

The Department of Foreign Languages, Gauhati University and the International Centre for South Asian Studies of the Russian State University for the Humanities, the Faculty of International Relations and Area Studies of the Russian State University for the Humanities together with Centre for South East Asian Studies are the initiators and organisers of this event. Their aim is to present the comprehensive image of unknown that is to be discovered and described.

Masters and postgraduate students are also invited to take part in the workshop.

Every speaker will be given 15 minutes for his/her presentation, followed by 10-15 minutes for discussion. The working language of the workshop will be English.

The workshop will be held at the Gauhati University, Assam, India. Those interested in participating in the Symposium may send their abstract to: [kandarpadas@gauhati.ac.in](mailto:kandarpadas@gauhati.ac.in) or [astol007@gattamelata.com](mailto:astol007@gattamelata.com) addressed to **Dr. Alexander Stolyarov, RSUH, Moscow, Russia**